



Project

Portsmouth Memorial
Bridge (Route 1)
Rehabilitation

Project No.

13678

From

Addie Kim

Meeting Notes**Subject**

Meeting with Portsmouth Department of Public Works
(DPW)—DPW offices, 680 Peverly Hill Road,
Portsmouth, NH—September 21, 12:30 p.m.

Present:

Steve Parkinson – Portsmouth Department of Public Works – Director
Debra Finnigan – Portsmouth DPW – Traffic Engineer
Nancy Mayville – NHDOT – Project Manager
Mark Richardson – NHDOT – Administrator, Bridge Design
Steve Liakos – NHDOT – Consultant Design Chief, Bridge Design
Robert Juliano – NHDOT – Senior Bridge Engineer
Gene McCarthy – McFarland-Johnson, Inc. – Traffic Engineer
Mark Zydel – McFarland-Johnson, Inc. – Director of Bridge Services
Ellen Marlatt – Independent Archaeological Consulting, General Manager
Beth Shephard – Preservation Company
John Watters – HNTB Corporation – Project Manager
Addie Kim – HNTB Corporation – Environmental Task Manager

Introduction

The purpose of the meeting was to review the status of and scheduling of key activities for the project with the Portsmouth Department of Public Works. John Watters reviewed the Part A activities (inspections, load ratings, cost estimates, repairs) and the scope of Part B activities (alternatives analysis, Environmental Study Report, and public involvement). He indicated that Scott Avenue is in a severe state of deterioration and will be completely replaced, and the alternatives to be studied for the Portsmouth Memorial (Route 1) Bridge are rehabilitation or replacement of the lift span.

Nancy Mayville indicated that the entire project is included in the NHDOT's 10-year plan for fiscal year 2009 and is scheduled to be advertised in October of 2008. She indicated that the Maine Department of Transportation owns half of Memorial Bridge and reviewed coordination with the Maine Department of Transportation regarding minor repairs to the Kittery viaduct. Outreach to the Town of Kittery would be coordinated through the Maine Department of Transportation.

Business Survey

John Watters indicated that a business survey is proposed as a means of obtaining input from local business owners as to their preferences for construction (1 to 1 ½ year complete closure or

alternating one-way traffic over 2 to 3 years) and assessing impacts on the business community. Nancy Mayville indicated that they would like the city's input on the draft survey form developed by NHDOT/HNTB (copies of which were distributed) and the performance of the survey, as well as the city's preferences for closures.

It was discussed that a full closure would cut down the time and costs for the project, but businesses would be polled for their preferences. Steve Parkinson indicated that in the mid-1980's the last major closure/rehabilitation of the bridge affected a number of businesses, but the composition of businesses in the area of the bridge site has changed, with the exception of Rosa's Restaurant. The businesses potentially affected at the bridge site would be different at this point in time.

Steve Parkinson indicated that he would coordinate with the city manager (John Bohenko) and would get back to us on the business survey and draft survey form. Nancy Mayville indicated that an official meeting with Portsmouth and Kittery officials that would be open to the public would be scheduled for early November. He recommended that the officials meeting be held after the November 8th election and that the business survey form be presented to the officials at the meeting. He indicated that the survey could be performed immediately after the officials meeting, sometime in early to mid-November. Steve Parkinson also suggested that another meeting with DPW be held before the November officials meeting.

Addie Kim indicated that it is envisioned that the survey could be concentrated on the blocks immediately adjoining the bridge site in both Portsmouth and Kittery, as sites more removed from the bridge site are less likely to be affected by bridge closures. Steve Parkinson indicated that he would suggest expanding the survey area and that impacts would be felt in a broader area with changes in traffic patterns. It was agreed that HNTB would mark up a map of proposed survey area for review by the City of Portsmouth.

Steve Parkinson inquired how the survey forms would be distributed. John Watters indicated that the forms could be either handed out or mailed. Steve Parkinson indicated that perhaps handing out forms might be the best means of distributing the survey to local businesses that don't own the property, but mailing forms would be a means to obtain input from owners on property plans.

Steve Parkinson indicated that the Downtown Business Council might get involved, which consists of the Market Street/Bow Street businesses. He mentioned that the Chamber of Commerce might be able to send electronic notices to its members. Nancy Mayville suggested that a briefing with businesses could be held at one of their regular meetings.

Status of Memorial Park Plans

Nancy Mayville provided an overview of the coordination performed to date with the cultural resource agencies on the project. She indicated that the cultural resource group that NHDOT regularly meets with (FHWA and NH SHPO) would like to consider the combined effect of Memorial Park and the Portsmouth Memorial (Route 1) Bridge. Since they were constructed together, the SHPO group would like them to be studied together. However, it is not clear as to whether the planning for the park will be performed in time to allow this to occur, although the project would consider temporary construction impacts on the park.

Addie Kim mentioned that a Determination of Eligibility is being prepared for the Memorial Park, and listing on the National Register of Historic Places would confer protections on the park under Section 106. She mentioned that Preservation Company prepared a visual

assessment of Memorial Park as part of a Draft Historic Structures Report which documents the historic development of the area. If the park is designated, this historic background could be used as a tool to be considered in park planning for any cultural resource reviews.

Beth Shephard of Preservation Company indicated that the survey of Memorial Park and the determination of eligibility would be separated out from the Draft Historic Structures Report. She inquired whether the city would like to have additional copies of the report, and will arrange for additional copies as requested.

Steve Parkinson indicated that the city is considering revamping of the parking lot area to better control traffic, since there are safety issues with cut-through traffic. A committee in the city is looking at a city memorial for Martin Luther King, Jr., and is looking at the green area where the flag pole is in Memorial Park. Nothing has been planned or determined with respect to whether the park will be moved or changed, pending the results of the bridge rehabilitation project. He mentioned that he would research any conceptual park plans, but his recollection was that these were in conceptual sketch form. He indicated that the configuration of the park area has been changed over time, in the mid- to late 1980's the park was shortened to provide parking. He pointed out that this area was constructed over older buildings.

Ellen Marlatt distributed an overlay of historical buildings that were originally constructed at the site of Memorial Park. She indicated that archaeological investigations to uncover any significant historic remnants will be performed over three days in early November that will involve trenching (one or two 3- foot wide bucket trenches) and heavy equipment. Any landscaping that is disturbed would be restored on the site. She inquired as to the best location for this to be performed. Steve Parkinson indicated that he would not like to see shrubbery in the park disturbed. He has no objections to excavations in the parking lot. Ellen Marlatt indicated that there would be less sitework (cutting of pavement, repaving, traffic impacts) needed for locating trenches in the greenery. Steve Parkinson would prefer that the trenching be dug along the existing footpath through the area in front of the flagpole. Steve Parkinson indicated that he would like to do a site walkover prior to the survey. Ellen Marlatt will follow up with Steve Parkinson on coordinating archaeological investigations.

Because of the depth of the fill prism, Ellen Marlatt indicated that there will be archaeological monitoring for excavations in other waterfront areas of the site. It was pointed out that alternating one-way traffic would have a larger impact on Memorial Park to accommodate shifts in traffic.

Citizen's Advisory Committee

Nancy Mayville mentioned that in earlier discussions with John Burke, former Transportation and Parking Director, a Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) had been considered. She asked Steve Parkinson about forming a CAC for the project. Steve Parkinson indicated that his first inclination, and he will check with the City Manager, is that a CAC would not be required for the project. For projects that continue for years, the city has found a CAC useful, but he did not think, given the shorter duration of the project, that a CAC was necessary. He will check on this and get back to NHDOT.

He did recommend consulting with the Portsmouth Historic District Commission. Addie Kim indicated that the historic district commission and other local cultural groups would be invited by NHDOT to participate in public participation/reviews in accordance with Section 106 requirements.

Traffic, Parking and Access Issues

John Watters indicated that we would like the city's input on parking and traffic issues, and construction detours. He suggested that the municipal lot, with its location adjacent to Scott Avenue, would be a prime location for a construction staging area, if this is amenable to the city. Steve Parkinson indicated that parking in the downtown area is very limited. He indicated that Prescott Park is heavily used during the summer months. He mentioned that taking one or two spaces is not an issue, taking 30 spaces is an issue, as drivers will avoid the construction area. Nancy Mayville inquired whether the city has a map of parking spaces, and Steve Parkinson indicated that this is available.

He indicated that even with alternating one-way traffic, a traffic detour should be used if possible.

For construction detours, he indicated that it would be easier and preferable to route traffic to I-95, rather than the Sarah Long Bridge, given that the access to the Route 1 bypass is complex from downtown. I-95 also extends past primarily commercial and industrial uses, while the Sarah Long Bridge detour would extend past residential neighborhoods.

Steve Parkinson inquired whether the results of the origin-destination surveys were available. Gene McCarthy indicated that the results of this would be produced through the traffic modeling, as to traffic mix, origins, and destinations. Steve Parkinson indicated that local traffic will know how to bypass construction, it is the tourist through traffic that will use the construction detours. The seasonal traffic that is not destined for businesses and downtown should be diverted away from the downtown area.

For construction detours, John Watters mentioned that, at a minimum, the bridge would be off-limits to vehicular traffic for a 4- to 6-week period. This outage will be required to accommodate mechanical work, which would be performed when the bridge is in an up (lift) position.

Steve Parkinson indicated that in the DPW's opinion, and he noted that he doesn't speak officially for the city, a shorter duration of construction (1 ½ year complete closure rather than 2- to 3-years alternating traffic) may be more tolerable for local residents. He asked whether painting and stripping were part of the project. Nancy Mayville indicated that NHDOT has not decided whether funding will permit the painting contract to be included in the bridge rehabilitation project. The advantage of combining them would be to complete painting during the bridge closures. Steve Parkinson indicated that, from the city's perspective, it would be preferable to perform all of the work during the same bridge closure and timeframe.

John Watters explained that Scott Avenue reconstruction will require complete closure of Scott Avenue, with traffic detoured around the construction site. He reiterated that use of the municipal parking lot would allow a direct workpath to the bridge. During construction, driveways would be provided for adjoining uses (Prescott Park, Pier II, and Harbour Place). He mentioned that there is a truck loading zone in this area near Harbour Place, and Steve Parkinson confirmed that this is used for Harbour Place. Steve Parkinson mentioned that closing Scott Avenue is not as big of an issue with complete closure of the Portsmouth Memorial Bridge. Scott Avenue is used as a turnaround when traffic backs up when the bridge opens, and closure of the road would be more of an issue when traffic backs up with alternating one-way traffic.

Steve Parkinson mentioned that the handicapped lot for Prescott Park adjoins the site. Prescott Park also provides access to two sets of municipal docks, one is floating concrete and one is wooden, that are used during the summer. He was not sure how heavily used these docks were. Prescott Park also has performances Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights and during the daytime. Other traffic in the area on Marcy Street is destined from the Children's Museum and Pierce Island, and this would need to be directed to downtown around the construction site. He noted that State Street where it adjoins Scott Avenue used to be two-way, but more parking was needed.

John Watters mentioned that Scott Avenue will be realigned, and the curbs will be changed a little bit and inquired as to any capital improvements in this area. He noted that there appears to be a partially collapsed drain. Steve Parkinson indicated that there is a line proposed that extends down the right-side of State Street to the right of the former Pier II Restaurant.

John Watters inquired about potential dockages for contractor access. Steve Parkinson indicated that municipal docks cannot accommodate deep draft vessels, but other potential dockages would be Granite State Minerals, Isle of Shoals service area that is state-owned, the Port Authority, and the Gypsum plant. He also mentioned that there are remnants of an old wharf next to I-95.

Addie Kim inquired about plans for the Riverwalk. Steve Parkinson referred questions on the Riverwalk to Cindy Hayden, the Deputy City Manager at extension 7218. In the future, this is envisioned to connect to Prescott Park, but at the present time it is proposed in front of six properties on Ceres Street.

Addie Kim inquired about whether mapping of parking is available electronically. Steve Parkinson indicated that this is available through the city's GIS planner, Jason Wise.

Nancy Mayville indicated that the city officials meeting will be targeted for the week of November 14th. Steve Parkinson indicated, if other issues or questions arise, he can be reached at (603) 766-1240 or on his cell phone at (603) 498-4046.

cc: All attendees
Kevin Nyhan, NHDOT
Joyce McKay, NHDOT
file

We believe these minutes accurately reflect what transpired at the meeting. If these minutes are not in accordance with your understanding, please contact the undersigned promptly; otherwise, we will assume that you concur with the accuracy of the above.